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ABSTRACT

Problems in the documentation of the history of fine arts in Japan are explored through a description of the influences of personalities and institutions in the historical study of Japanese art, a survey of the literature and documents involved, and the relationships between museum and library documentation procedures. Suggestions offered for the improvement of documentation procedures include national projects, liaison activities for library and museum associations, cooperative exchanges between libraries and museums, and the systematic and comprehensive organization of resource materials. Statistics on fine arts publications as a percentage of total commercial publications in Japan are presented for the period 1921-1978. (RAA)

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THE PROBLEMS OF THE DOCUMENTATION ON THE HISTORY OF ART IN JAPAN

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Introduction

The term of "art" in this paper implies "fine arts", that is to say, paintings, sculptures, crafts, and so on in the genres of formative arts. This paper deals with some problems of the documentation on the history of fine arts in Japan, and does not deal with the history of design.

The documentation on the history of art can be divided into two kinds of concepts of documentation. One is documentation in "museum process" which is to exhibit the works in the history of art, to describe records about them and to preserve them in good conditions. The other is documentation in "library process", which deals with literatures necessary to historical study of art. The reason why the documentation on the history of art is divided into two processes is that the object of "history" of "art" is the works of art which exist in the present and is not past events and facts as in ordinary "history".

First, I will trace developments of the historical study of art in Japan and point out some of its characteristics. By doing so, I reveal the fact that documentation activities in art museums, galleries, libraries and research institutes in Japan have been influenced by the characters of the historical study of art in Japan. Second, I make a survey of literatures and documents in the history of art in Japan. After these procedures, I suggest some ways to solve the problems of the documentation on the history of art in Japan.

Characteristics of the historical study of art in Japan

The historical study of art in Japan started to develop with the movement for the preservation of national treasures which had been on the rise in the middle of the Meiji Period (about 1890).(1) Ernest Fenolorsa (1853-1908) and Kakuzo(Tenshin) Okakura(1862-1913) took a leadership of this movement. Fenolossa, who was invited to Tokyo Imperial University in 1878 as a visiting professor, emphasized the merits and values of Japanese art and criticized the West-oriented trends in Japanese art at that time. He gave the lecture, "Bijutsu Shinsetsu (On the essence of art)" at the Ryûchi-kai (The Society to Praise Japanese Art) in 1882 and maintained his opinion on Japanese art. Okakura, an excellent follower of him, advocated building the Tokyo Fine Arts School and then he himself became president. "Nippon Bijutsu-shi Kôgi (The lecture on the history of Japanese art)" which he lectured in the school seems to be the first on this subject in Japan.

The tendency toward the restoration of traditional Japanese arts became the most pronounced when the committee for the preservation of both historic temples and shrines was organized and the law to achieve the purpose was enacted in 1896. The Japanese government selected historic architectures and treasures of all Japanese temples and shrines from historical and artistical points of view. Then the selected old architectures and treasures began to be kept under the protection of the law.

In these social trends, historical study of art flourished. The Meiji government needed to show off its cultural levels in order to have equal relations with the Great Powers of Western Europe and the United States.

In such a circumstance, the historical study of art in Japan could not help having the character of a national project. Various kinds of state-supported institutions for art were established; the Imperial Museums in Tokyo, Nara and Kyoto, the Research Institute of Art attached to the Imperial Art Academy, the imperial universities in Tokyo, Kyoto, Keijô (Seoul) and other cities, etc. Mainly these institutions and their staffs had made on the historical study of art in Japan till the end of the World War II. After the War, museums and art museums on the basis of private bodies and local public entities increased in number, and some of the private, municipal and national colleges and universities, which were established according to the new national educational system, offered the course of the history of art. Consequently researchers of the history of art rapidly increased in number. But the tendency that national institutions and their staffs had been taking the initiative in the historical study of art didn't change.

The next aspect of the historical study of art in Japan is that there are three main fields of research into Japanese history of art, Oriental history of art and Western history of art. Oriental history of art which mainly deals with Chinese and Korean history of art is often treated as the fellow of the history of Japanese art because Japanese arts have had a close relationship with Chinese and Korean arts. When we study the history of Japanese and Oriental art, researchers can appreciate works of art directly and use the more documents and literatures. But when we study the history of Western art, researchers have got serious handicaps in these points. Although there were such difficulties, the Japanese have have been eager to learn from the Western developed countries and to

catch up with them since the Meiji Period. Particularly, they have imported and mastered various kinds of techniques of paintings, sculptures etc. in Western modern arts. The historical study of Western art has been flourishing year by year since the Meiji Period, and a lot of artists and researchers have visited the United States and Western Europe so many times. And some of them have been playing an active part internationally after the World War II. But unfortunately, the special institutions such as "Western art library" or "Information center for the historical study of Western art" have not been established in Japan. Not a few of researchers who have ever studied abroad feel dissatisfied with such state in Japan and appeal to the public to establish the special institutions.(2)

The third aspect of the historical study of art in Japan is that the study on artists seems to be neglected.(3) Though researches and discussions about the details of the history of Japanese art have advanced, the plot of the history of Japanese art has been little changed as if it was fixed by "Union catalog of national treasures".(4) The catalog is "The illustrated union catalog of specially protected architectures and national treasures, vol. 1-3", compiled by the Ministry of Home Affairs of Japan for the Anglo-Japanese Exposition held in England in 1910. In short, the attitude to constrcut history of art systematically on the basis of the study on artists has little been seen in Japan, and in the historical study of art in Japan there have been many individual researches such as positivistical, stylistical, aesthetical study, etc.

Organizations of documentation on the history of art

The nature of documentation on the history of art in Japan depends on the aspects of the historical study of art as mentioned above. Documentation activities in this subject are supported mainly by national organizations because there is a historical background that national institutions and their staffs have made on the historical study of art.(5) As to the study on Japanese and Oriental ancient art, three "National Museums", located in Tokyo, Nara and Kyoto, have played an important role in this subject, and two "National Research Institutes for Cultural Properties", located in Tokyo and Nara, have also made great contributions. These institutions have their own libraries and are making documentation activities in both museum and library processes. As to the modern arts, two "National Museums of Modern Arts" which were founded in Tokyo and Kyoto after the World War II have made documentation activities in museum process. "National Museum of Western Art" in Tokyo, which has "Matsukata collection" consisted of paintings by the French impressionists, has made the same activities.

The library and museum in "Tokyo National University of Arts", which is the succession of "Tokyo Fine Arts School", made the documentation activities on the basis of many materials for the ancient and modern art in Japan. And other promoters and contributors in the historical study of art in Japan are the courses of the history of art and their staffs that belong to national universities which inherit the tradition of the imperial universities and are located in Hokkaido, Tôhoku, Tokyo, Nagoya, Ôsaka and Kyûshû. The libraries in these national universities fulfill important roles in the organization for the documentation of the history of art. "Oriental Cultures Research Institute" which belongs to Tokyo National University has made the unique documentation activities, and the National Diet Library has many materials for the history of art in Japan.

Needless to say, only national institutions have studies the history of art and made documentation activities in this subject. Some of the traditional temples and shrines have also made documentation activities in museum process. There are lots of museums and art museums, which were founded and have been managed by local public entities, individuals or body corporates, and so these museums have their own documentation activities. Recently, new museums have been established one after another by local public entities and much attention was paid to their purchaising a lot of modern Western paintings.

Since the end of the World War II, the number of colleges and universities, whether national, local public or private, have been increasing as the result of reformation of the Japanese higher education system. Many of them have established the course of the history of art and turned out researchers constantly. Subsequently the libraries which belong to the colleges and universities have started to make documentation activities of the history of art.

The states of materials on the history of art in Japan

In this chapter, document materials which are essential to documentation on the history of art in Japan would be surveyed.

(1) Investigation and inspection on works of ancient art , historic architectures and their related documents which were inevitable to the historical study of art were made as one of the national projects in the trend to rediscover merits of Japanese art since the Meiji Period. As the result of these researches, some publications appeared:

"Nippon Teikoku Bijutsu Ryaku-shi (A short history of Japanese arts)" which was published on the occasion of the Paris World Exposition in 1900; "Kokuhô-chô (Union catalog of national treasures)" which have already described in this paper; "Tôei Jukô, vol. 1-6 (Far Eastern art treasures)", published by the Department of the Imperial Household in 1908-1909; "Hôryû-ji Ôkagami, vol. 1-64 (Hôryû-ji Temple's treasures)" compiled by Tokyo Fine Arts School in 1913-1919; "Nanto Shichi-dai-ji Ôkagami, vol. 1-77 (The pictorial records of treasures of seven big temples in Nara)", edited by Tokyo Fine Arts School in 1921-1929.

Literatures as showed above were published by national institutions. In addition to those institutions, private publishing companies worth memorizing are the following:

Kokka-sha, Ôtsuka Kôgei-sha, Benri-dô (these publishing companies have continued till the present day); Shinbi-shoin, Juraku-sha, Gahô-sha, Asuka-en (these publishing companies have already gone out).

These national and private publishers published the illustrated art books which were printed in heliotype, collotype, or offset. The historical study

of art in Japan has been developed on the basis of these books and has not requested the new publishing plans. After the World War II, the new epoch-making books on the history of Japanese art were published by the Mainichi Newspapers and Iwanami-shoten.(6)

Though these fundamental books of the history of Japanese art are very substantial in contents and numbers, sytematical plan for publishing books of history of art in Japan has not been carried out. This trend can be seen in the review, "Prospect and retrospect of historical study in Japan" published annually in "Shigaku Zasshi (Journal of historical science)" (1889-), edited by the Historical Society of Japan. The reviews of monographs are divided into the chapters according to periods: ancient, feudal and modern. Regrettably there are no chapters of the comprehensive art history or the methodology of the history of art.

(2) Research papers on the history of art are primarily seen in scientific periodicals. Scientific periodicals on fine arts are very few in Japan. But bulletins by universities and research institutions in Japan can be considered as the similar kind. The most authoritative journals on the history of art in Japan are the following:

"Kokka (The best treasures)", published by Kokka-sha, founded in 1889; "Bijutsu Kenkyû (The study of fine arts)", published by the Tokyo National Research Institute of Cultural Propeties, founded in 1932. These journals have been published from the early modern times to the present day.

Another type of authoritative journals on the history of art is the ones which has been published since the end of the World War II. They are the following:

"Bukkyô Geijutsu (Buddhist arts)", compiled by the Society of Buddhist Arts, published by Mainichi Newspaper, founded in 1948; "Bijutsu-shi

(History of art)", compiled by the Society of Art History, published by Benri-dô, founded in 1950; "Bigaku (Aesthetics)", published by the Society of Aesthetics, founded in 1950.

(3) Now, we survey the bibliographies and indexes of the literatures on the history of art in Japan. The bibliographies are the following:

"Tôyô Bijutsu Bunken Mokuroku (Bibliography of literatures on Oriental arts), 1867-1936", edited by Institute of Art Research (in Tokyo National Research Institute of Cultural Properties), published by Zauhô Kankô-kai in 1941; "Nippon Tôyô Kobijutsu Bunken Mokuroku (Bibliography of literatures on Japanese and Oriental ancient arts), 1936-1965", edited by Institute of Art Research, published by Chûô Kôron Bijutsu Shuppan in 1969; "Bukkyô Bijutsu Bunken Mokuroku (Bibliography of Buddhist arts), 1960-1969", edited by UNESCO, published by Chûô Kôron Bijutsu Shuppan in 1973; "Bijutsu ni kansuru Zasshi Bunken Mokuroku (Index to periodical literatures on fine arts), 1965-1974", published Nichi-gai Associates in 1978.

Indexes are the following:

"Kokka Sakuin (Cumulative index to contents appearring in journal of "Kokka", nos. 1-505", published in 1933; "Bunka-kei Bunken Mokuroku, vol. 11 Bigaku-hen (Humanities index, vol. 11)", compiled by Science Council of Japan in 1961.

Periodical indexes are the following:

"Shigaku Zasshi Nenkan (Journal of historical science, annual edition)", compiled by the Historical Society of Japan, published by Yamakawa Shuppan-sha; "Nippon Bijutsu Nenkan (Japanese fine arts annual)" published by Institute of Art Research; "Zasshi Kiji Sakuin Jinmon Shakai-hen (Index to the periodical literatures; humanities and social sciences)", published by the National Diet Library.

(4) Catalogs of works of art, such as catalogs of the collections of museums and art galleries, catalogs of art exhibition and catalogs of art objects sales, are also basic materials for studying the history of art.

National museums, art museums and other institutions produce good catalogs of their own holdings and art exhibitions they had. Private art museums, galleries and big department stores which have held various art exhibitions are also doing the same thing as national ones have done. But it is regrettable that no libraries have acquired these catalogs systematically and comprehensively. The library in "Tokyo National Research Institute of Cultural Properties" might be the only exceptional one in this case.

(5) Visual materials like photographs or slide-films of works of art and architectures are also indispensable to the historical study of art. "Tokyo National Research Institute of Cultural Properties" and "Tokyo National Museum" have a large number of such visual materials, but they have not been opened to the public.

(6) The total number of annual commercial publications on fine arts and all annual commercial publications are showed in the table of the next page year by year. The rate of the former to the latter has been distinctively changing since 1972. This tendency seems to mean that the Japanese society as a whole has been inclined to introduce "culture" into everyday life on the background of economic stability. The remarkable feature of publications on fine arts since 1972 is increasing of the illustrated complete works series in the various fields of the fine arts.

Statistics on annual commercial publications in Japan (books only)

year	A	B	C	year	A	B	C
1921	11,903	186	1.7	1958	(18,534) 24,983	409	2.2
1922	13,081	637	4.9	1959	(18,325) 24,152	389	2.1
1923	10,946	509	4.7	1960	(18,198) 23,682	390	2.1
1924	14,361	453	3.2	1961	(16,824) 21,849	380	2.3
1925	18,028	560	3.1	1962	(16,951) 22,010	381	2.2
1926	20,213	744	3.7	1963	(17,582) 22,887	380	2.2
1927	19,967	616	3.1	1964	(18,248) 22,754	477	2.6
1928	19.880	711	3.6	1965	(19,200) 24,203	445	2.3
1929	21,111	627	3.0	1966	(19,630) 24,392	538	2.7
1930	22,467	670	3.0	1967	(20,083) 24,595	563	2.8
1931	23,110	817	3.5	1968	(21,263) 25,421	782	3.7
1932	22,104	712	3.2	1969	(22,184) 26,424	845	3.8
1933	24,025	844	3.5	1970	(22,432) 26,818	977	4.4
1934	26,331	907	3.4	1971	(23,032) 26,595	980	4.3
1935	30,347	915	3.0	1972	(22,806) 26,332	1,115	4.9
1936	31,996	1,817	5.7	1973	(23,864) 27,354	1,089	4.7
1937	30,732	1,107	3.6	1974	(25,153) 28,037	1,386	5.5
1938	29,466	812	2.8	1975	(20,388) 22,727	1,493	7.3
1939	28,054	490	1.7	1976	(21,309) 23,464	1,932	9.1
1940	26,279	447	1.7	1977	(22,813) 25,148	1,884	8.3
1941	28,099	488	1.7	1978	(24,176) 26,906	1,807	7.7
	.....						
1956	(18,175) 24,541	447	2.5				
1957	(18,212) 25,299	461	2.5				

A: the total number of all annual commercial publications. The number in parentheses indicates the number excluding juvenile books and cram books and this is used as the denominator in C.

B: the total number of annual commercial publications on fine arts.

C: B/Ax100(%)

Notes: new publications and reprints(1921-1974), new publications only(1975-1978)

Sources: "Shuppan Nenkan(Publications annual)", ed. by Tokyo-do, for 1921-1941.

"Shuppan Nenkan(Publications annual)", ed. by Shuppan News-sha, for 1957-1978.

Some problems of documentation on the history of art

On the basis of the above mentioned considerations, some problems of documentation on the history of art are pointed out as follows:

(1) In historical situations peculiar to Japan as it has already been described, institutions taking a role of documentation activities have been restricted to the national ones. Reflecting the conservative character of national institutions, information and materials for the history of art have not been opened to the public completely. National and local public museums are likely to be controlled by the Agency for Cultural Affairs. This character of the institutions has brought out excellent merits in the case of executing some big projects, but also demerits of preventing making vivid intercooperative system among all of the research institutes, libraries and museums, whether public or private.

Next two publications are the examples of the merits of the big national projects:

(a) "Zenkoku Kokkoritsu Bijutse-kan Shozo Sakuhin Mokuroku (National Union Catalog of holdings in national and local public museums) vol.1-5" (1967-1971)

(b)"Zenkoku Shiritsu Bijutsu-kan Shozo Sakka-betsu Mokuroku (National Union Catalog of holdings in private museums: arranged by artists' name) vil.1-4" (1973-1977)

These catalogs were compiled by the Agency for Cultural Affairs in order to establish some mutual cooperative systems among art museums. But, we can hardly find any cooperations between (i) the National Diet Library and libraries of national universities, and (ii) National museums, art museums and research institutes. It is necessary to construct the cooperative systems among these institutions according to specific characters of their holdings and also necessary to open materials and information to the public.

(2) Almost all of the museums and art museums, whether national, public or private, join the Japanese Association of Museums which is a liasion organization in Japan. But this association has members such as zoological and botanical gardens and includes no special subcommittee for art in any forms. Other liaison organization of art museums is the Planning Council of Art Museums in Japan which is organized to plan and

promote the travelling exhibits.

The details of the number of museums and art museums in Japan are as follows: National ones: 10, local public ones: 79 and prtvate ones: 208. But no liaison organizations among them are built up. We can hardly find the liaison organizations of libraries in the field of art. There is a subcommittee of speciallibraries in the Japanese Library Association, but no exchange among special libraries of art. No libraries dealing with art subject join Council of Special Libraries in Japan. Libraries Association of National Colleges and Universities in Japan do not have the subcommittee on art subject.

In order to develop documentation activities on the history of art in Japan the following problems must be solved; (i) mutual cooperation among museums and art museums, (ii) mutual cooperation among all libraries which cover the field of art, (iii) establishment of some liaison organizations to make it possible to have a mutual relation between museums and libraries.

(3) It is to be hoped that both in museum and library process will work together to develop the historical study of art, But the fact is that both of them work separately of each other. This might be, in most cases, caused by the difference of social positions of curators and librarians on Japanese national accrediting systems. Neither curators nor librarians in charge of art subject can work sufficiently without a lot of business experiences. As far as a curator is concerned, he is needed to have an eye for the beautiful as well as an ability of documentation and developing its technology. A curator unable to feel the beautiful can not perform his work. As far as a librarian is concerned, if he has enough knowledge and technology of documentation, whether he has an eye for thebeautiful or not is not considered to be important. The conditions like these have made the documentation on the history of art underdeveloped.

The curator should not exaggerate "the beautiful" and look down on the knowledge and technology of documentation. On the other hand, librarians in charge of art should not shut up his interests in the documentation in library process and he should be interested in "the beautiful" more and more. Cooperative work by curators and librarians according to their functions will make the documentation of the history truly effective, and the historical study of art will get fruitful and go far.

(4) To make full use of real functions of the documentation of the history of art, many kinds of materials necessary to studying the history of art are needed to organize systematically and comprehensively.

Documentation in museum process such as selecting, acquiring, cataloging, classifying, storing and displaying art works is according to classification, period, medium, technique and other elements. Documentation in library process dealing with books, periodicals, phamphlets and other document materials is executed according to verbal information.

I would like to say it again that historical study of art needs the integration of two kinds of documentation, that is, museum and library process. Printed matters and duplicate copies carrying image, such as photo materials (Negative and positive films, photographs), catalogs (for collection, exhibition and sale), reproduced image materials (printing, posters, calendars, small size graphics), video tapes and movie films tend to be excluded from museum and library process. But these materials must also be organized even if they are treated in with museum or library process. Total documentation dealing with works of art, visual materials and library documents might be regarded as the real documentation on the history of art.

(5) Japan has learned from the West European and American countries and accomplished the modernization since the Meiji Period. Japan has also learned the methodology and the thinking way of the historical study of art and its documentation. In recent years, West European and American countries seem to turn their faces to the Orientalism or Zen (Buddhism) and discover new merits of Oriental and Japanese cultures, and subsequently Oriental art including Japanese art has become notices. These trends may be based on the realization that their materials civilization has reached a deadlock.

Notes

1. Japanese art history, by Shûichi KISHIRO. Shikai Shobô, 1936. (History education series, pt.2. Literatures, no.4. The recent trends of the Japanese history)

2. "Bibliotheca Hertziana", by Daigô SAWAYANAGI. In Books, no.278. (Iwanami Shoten, 1972.)

   "Toward the establishment of the art library", by Kimio NAKAYAMA. In Monthly report of Fuji TV Gallery, vol.5, no.1 (1974)

3. Re-examination of Japanese art, by Yukio YASHIRO. Shincho-sha, 1978.

4. Ibid.

5. "Special libraries of art and design in Japan", by Itsuo OKUBO. In The library journal, vol.73, no.10 (Japan Library Association, 1979)

6. National tresures, vol.1-7. The Mainichi Newspaper, 1936-67.

   Important cultural properties in Japan, vol.1-32. The Mainichi Newspaper, 1972-78.

   Pictorial records on tresures of six big temples in Nara, vol.1-16. Iwanami Shoten, 1972-75.

   Pictorial records on tresures of old temples in Yamato, vol.1-7. Iwanami Shoten, 1977-8.